

Training Recreational Divers to Monitor Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) in Puget Sound

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Abstract

Recreational divers have the potential to act as important sentinels in the search for introduced marine and freshwater species within the intertidal and subtidal areas of Puget Sound and Georgia Basin. Investigators at the Washington Sea Grant Program (WSGP), in partnership with the Puget Sound Action Team and the Environmental Protection Agency, recruited recreational divers for training in the recognition and reporting of non-native species. Working with the largest local dive publication, *Northwest Dive News*, and several local area dive organizations, interpretive centers and dive clubs, we held training workshops in locations throughout Puget Sound, Washington during 2002 and early 2003. The purpose of the project was to enlist divers in preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species (ANS) by recognizing and reporting sightings of ANS. WSGP created an on-line reporting form to allow divers to report sightings of possible ANS in local waters. The effectiveness of training divers to recognize and prevent ANS in Puget Sound was tested with a survey of divers in the region. The findings indicate that most participants in ANS identification training workshops changed behavior as a result of the knowledge they gained; in particular, they became more aware of the presence of ANS and are more likely to report sightings in the future. Most of those divers surveyed are concerned about potential impacts of the European green crab (*Carcinus maenas*) and zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) on Pacific Northwest resources.